

As a 24 year veteran of the Army National Guard, I served to safeguard the personal freedoms of all Americans. My military service coupled with nearly two decades of teaching has convinced me that America must remain engaged in a changing world. While this requires our nation to provide leadership abroad, we must also never lose focus on building our infrastructure and growing our economy here at home.

Iraq and Afghanistan

After nearly nine years, the war in Iraq has finally come to a responsible close. Moving forward, we must redouble our efforts to make certain our veterans have access to the best health care possible, are provided with ample opportunities for education and well paying jobs, and are becoming fully reintegrated into the lives they once knew.

Unlike the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was not a war of choice. It has been a war forced upon us by the terrible attacks on September 11, 2001, and reinforced by the subsequent attacks on innocent civilians in nations across the world. The war in Afghanistan should never have gone on this long, and it likely would not have, had the Bush Administration not decided to shift resources to an unnecessary conflict in Iraq.

In general, I support the President's overall strategy for Afghanistan but I have concerns over the timeline and details of its execution. The culture, terrain, and politics of Afghanistan present extreme challenges to our counterinsurgency strategy, and while we must bring our troops home as quickly and as safely as possible, we must also remain vigilant to ensure that Afghanistan and Pakistan do not provide terrorists a safe haven.

Commitment to Human Rights

China

I'm proud to serve as the ranking House Democrat on the Congressional-Executive

Commission on China (CECC).

The CECC was created by Congress in October 2001 to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China, and to submit an annual report to the President and Congress. It consists of nine Senators, nine Members of the House of Representatives, and five senior Administration officials appointed by the President.

Torture

While we must hold other countries accountable for human rights abuses abroad, it is also essential that America provides an example for other nations to follow. I believe that torture weakens us diplomatically and militarily, and makes us less secure. That is why I have been a cosponsor of the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act in the past. I will continue to support any measure that broadcasts America's commitment to opposing all forms of torture.